

~~SECRET~~

25X1

Haiti

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

23 December 1988

Haiti: Aftermath of the Coup
A Comparison with Liberia and Ghana

25X1

Summary

President Prosper Avril, already confronted once by a coup attempt only weeks after noncommissioned officers and soldiers installed him in mid-September, probably will face additional such threats over the next year. Although the new Haitian regime has taken several promising steps to consolidate its authority--purging unpopular officials, appealing to opposition leaders, and moving against corruption--our comparison with the period of consolidation following similar coups in Liberia and Ghana suggests Avril faces numerous obstacles to retaining power. Most importantly, he lacks an alternative power base, is not viewed as a populist leader, and can count on only tenuous public and military support for his regime. By contrast, the new leaders in Liberia and Ghana began their tenures with notable strength in all these areas. Avril recognizes these vulnerabilities and has tried--with some success--to convince other countries that his government is worthy of funding support. Even so, the government has not been able to attract enough foreign

This typescript was prepared by [] South America-Caribbean Division, Office of African and Latin American Analysis []

25X1

[]. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, South America-Caribbean Division, ALA [] []

25X1

25X1

25X1

ALA M 88-2009⁹

25X1

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

25X1

assistance to satisfy Haiti's most pressing budgetary constraints--meeting the basic material demands of the enlisted ranks and filling a sizable foreign exchange shortfall through this fiscal year. Without new and sustained outside assistance of the sort available to the regimes in Liberia and Ghana, Avril is not likely to have the resources needed to maintain the loyalty of the military, a necessary ingredient for exercising control. [REDACTED]

25X1

*

*

*

On 17 September 1988, a small group of Presidential Guard noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and soldiers--dissatisfied with their poor living conditions, President Henri Namphy's inept leadership, and a wave of government-sanctioned violence--seized the presidential palace in a bloodless coup. The group initially pressed its apparent leader--then-Sergeant Joseph Hebreux--to assume the presidency. Hebreux refused the post and lobbied for Brigadier General Prosper Avril, whom he considered honorable and competent, to replace Namphy. Hebreux later claimed he had earlier discussed with Avril the latter's becoming President. Several hours after Namphy was deposed, the NCOs and soldiers who led the coup issued a proclamation installing Avril as chief executive and listing their demands. These primarily concerned higher pay and improved working conditions, but also called for reinstatement of the 1987 constitution. [REDACTED]

25X1

In the days following, it became increasingly apparent that the NCOs would retain considerable influence in the new government. Hebreux became, and remains, a de facto vice-president and the principal link between Avril and the military's lower ranks. According to US Embassy and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] discussed all major decisions--including naming the new, predominantly civilian cabinet--with the NCOs to avoid misunderstandings or opposition. [REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

25X1

To assess the potential for Avril to solidify control over Haiti in the next year, we examined the periods of consolidation following junior officer coups in Liberia and Ghana. Despite clear cultural and economic distinctions between Haiti and African countries, we believe the basic factors that helped sustain the Liberian and Ghanaian governments could serve as a yardstick for the survivability of Haiti's new regime. From these earlier cases, we identified seven elements relevant to the

*Hebreux was promoted in November to a new post of Sergeant Major of the High Command. [REDACTED]

25X1

SECRET

Haitian case--three that currently favor the Avril government and four that work against it. []

Longevity of Junior Military Regimes: Liberia and Ghana

The governments of Liberia and Ghana--installed respectively in April 1980 and December 1981 by junior officers and enlisted men--have endured longer than most observers expected, given the initial chaos that marked each regime. In Liberia's case, Master Sergeant Samuel Doe was nearly illiterate, with few skills necessary to rebuild the shattered economy. In Ghana, Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings in his own way was ill-equipped to deal with the failing economy or to build a more egalitarian society, despite his earlier stint as Head of State following a coup in 1979. []

Despite their obvious shortcomings, Doe and Rawlings took several steps that have enabled them to maintain power. Both leaders:

- Immediately purged unpopular senior military and civilian leaders who were perceived to be part of the entrenched elite by the soldiers, urban poor, and students who composed the new governments' constituencies.
- Employed populist rhetoric appealing to those traditionally excluded from power and wealth.
- Promised to wipe out corruption--a contributor to the downfall of the previous governments--and to improve living conditions for the masses, although neither leader offered concrete programs to do so.
- Built alternative military or paramilitary structures, particularly strong personal bodyguard units drawn heavily from their own ethnic groups. []

External factors also apparently helped the regimes to solidify control:

- Both countries received sizable assistance from outside powers--Liberia from the United States and Ghana from Libya--that gave the new governments legitimacy and resources.
- Real or imagined threats from discredited exile groups helped to unite the public and the military behind the populist leadership. []

Liberia. The coup led by Doe and a small group of soldiers shattered many of Liberia's social and political institutions. It took Doe several days to restore order, and the period immediately following the coup was characterized by a sweeping

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

purge of the civilian and military leadership, including some murders of those suspected of corruption. Resistance was isolated and ineffective and, although many members of the former Americo-Liberian elite fled abroad, they were unable to mount an effective exile-led counter coup. While fear of the vengeful Doe regime probably contributed to holding the government together, many of Doe's actions--including public executions of some prominent Americo-Liberians--were greeted with wide popular approval. Doe also surrounded himself with loyalists from his own tribe, making him less vulnerable to another coup attempt.

25X1

During its first year, Doe's regime remained weak and beset by fears of exile invasions that never materialized. Recognizing the regime's inexperience with the governing process, Doe brought some civilian politicians, Army officers, and a few technocrats into the cabinet. His government, nonetheless, lacked real talent and was united only in its opposition to the ousted regime. Moreover, Doe remained the dominant personality, while the blurred lines of authority between the largely civilian cabinet and the military ruling council increased policy drift and confusion. Inept government management further weakened the economy, and the climate of political instability undermined business confidence.

25X1

Despite this poor performance, Doe remained popular largely because of resentment of the ousted regime and his ability to portray himself as a soldier dedicated to improving the lot of the poor. This image was reinforced by his early unwillingness to assume a higher military rank and by quickly hiking pay for the troops.

25X1

One key to Doe's survival almost certainly was his early decision to maintain Liberia's longstanding "special relationship" with the United States. Within hours after his coup, Doe proved open and receptive to overtures from the US diplomatic mission, which quickly determined that he was basically pro-American, despite his Third World rhetoric. Washington's willingness to prop up post-coup Liberia with increased economic aid of \$80 million a year contributed significantly to stabilizing the regime.

25X1

Ghana. The Rawlings government appeared to hold together more through Rawlings's charismatic personality than any early program to solve serious economic and political problems. Support for the new regime came primarily from the urban poor, students, leftist intellectuals, and members of the largely undisciplined military who believed in the "Robin Hood" reputation Rawlings had acquired during his previous term as head of government. He had championed a populist "revolution" to stamp out the malfeasance that had brought near financial collapse and then handed power to an elected civilian government lacking a coherent policy to guide such change.

25X1

SECRET

25X1

The regime's effort to restore order and stability during its first six months in power ran into endless obstacles. The new government was hampered by cumbersome bureaucratic procedures as well as sharp ideological and personality differences within the military-dominated ruling council. In this climate, Rawlings failed to attract competent technocrats, and policymaking drifted as competing factions jockeyed for power. [REDACTED]

25X1

Rawlings was preoccupied by security concerns growing out of his fear of attack by Ghanaian exiles or the demoralized military. Unlike Doe, Rawlings did not direct the execution of the former leadership, but he purged the senior officer corps, especially those trained in the West. Many military and civilian elites fled the country, retired, or were arrested. Scattered military mutinies dotted the regime's early months in power, as did machinations and loud talk by exiles based in neighboring Togo. Despite the economy's continued decline, Rawlings remained highly popular at home. Moreover, like Doe in Liberia, Rawlings maintained a core of loyalists from his own tribe who served as a privileged and effective palace guard. [REDACTED]

25X1

We believe Ghana's immediate restoration of relations with Libya after the coup and acceptance of military assistance from Tripoli--small arms, ammunition, and some advisers--enhanced the regime's security. Rawlings professed admiration for Libyan leader Qadhafi and his "revolution," a situation Qadhafi quickly exploited by being the first foreign country to recognize the new government. Although Tripoli's token economic aid of food and oil credits was far less than Washington's aid to Liberia, it had a symbolic, legitimizing effect. [REDACTED]

25X1

Factors Favorable to Strengthening Control

The Avril government has taken, or acquiesced in, action on three fronts that should help the new regime consolidate control: purging unpopular leaders, appealing to those traditionally excluded from power and wealth, and seeking to curtail official corruption. We believe, after studying events in Liberia and Ghana, that these are important steps toward establishing the support necessary to retain power, although we also acknowledge that these measures are not sufficient to guarantee political stability in Haiti. [REDACTED]

25X1

Purging Unpopular Officials. Events in Ghana and Liberia show that the removal of unpopular officials can be key in establishing control, both by building support for a new regime and eliminating potential rivals. In Haiti, Avril--at the insistence of the NCOs who staged the coup--purged all the military's senior commanders, thereby removing possible adversaries while building credibility with the troops. Days after the coup, Avril announced the retirement of every general in the Haitian military with the exception of new Commander-in-Chief Major General Herald Abraham and himself. By the end of

SECRET

25X1

September, Avril also moved against one of the most feared officers in the Haitian military and a serious threat to his leadership--Colonel Jean-Claude Paul of the Dessalines Battalion.

Avril and his advisers had been planning Paul's ouster and finally deposed him when they suspected he was about to move against them.

25X1

25X1

Other unpopular military officers and civilian managers also were removed. Altogether, more than 120 officers of all ranks were dismissed by their troops, whose actions later were endorsed by government decrees. The managers of some state-owned factories were booted out by their employees in a similar fashion. Avril had little choice, in our view, but to allow these expulsions to placate the lower ranks and a general populace demanding changes in leadership and economic improvement. These ousters have helped Avril so far by removing inept or corrupt officers--many with ties to the former Duvalier regimes--and by allowing dissatisfied troops and civilians to vent their built-up frustrations. Nevertheless, these episodes have seriously undermined military discipline and threaten to further weaken military capabilities and to prompt economic disruptions over the longer run.

25X1

Populist Appeals to the Disenfranchised. Events in Ghana and Liberia also showed that early appeals to groups traditionally excluded from power can help a new regime to limit opposition when it is most vulnerable, and possibly to develop a base of support over time. In Haiti, Avril and Hebreux met with all major anti-Duvalierist leaders, including having unprecedented talks with Haitian Communist Party leader Rene Theodore, within the first weeks of coming to power. Within two months, Avril also circulated among opposition leaders a draft decree to establish an electoral commission--the first step in preparing the way for elections in Haiti. As a result, the erstwhile opposition has generally--albeit tentatively--supported the new regime. Although some centrist and leftist party leaders have begun to criticize the government for failing to set a date for a return to civilian rule, most have refrained from active protests. One leftist group canceled demonstrations twice at the request of government officials who feared any large gatherings could threaten the new regime's survival.

25X1

Moving Against Corruption. The Doe and Rawlings experiences also indicate that early steps to curb the venality and other excesses of previous regimes can help a new government establish its legitimacy with the populace, particularly if these abuses sparked the coup. In Haiti, according to the US Embassy, Avril has removed or consented to the ouster of numerous corrupt officials. For example, he dissolved an infamously corrupt development agency established by former President Namphy. The government also has begun legal proceedings against the corrupt and brutal former Port-au-Prince Mayor, Franck Romain, currently staying at the Dominican Embassy; some other notorious officials have gone into hiding or fled the country. To further

SECRET

25X1

demonstrate his desire to "clean up" Haiti, Avril in late September ordered a raid on the headquarters of the formally disbanded Ton Ton Macoutes--Duvalier's private thugs--that resulted in the arrests of several suspects in last November's election day violence. [REDACTED]

25X1

Factors Working Against Consolidating Power

Nevertheless, we believe four key factors that helped the regimes in Liberia and Ghana to consolidate power are lacking in the Haitian case:

- An alternative power structure.
- Public and military united behind the leadership.
- A popular, populist leader.
- Substantial foreign assistance.

Avril's government probably does not have to overcome all of these shortcomings, but failure to make progress on some of them will leave his regime vulnerable to continuing challenges to its authority. [REDACTED]

25X1

An Alternative Power Structure. The durability of a new government is enhanced when its leaders have a loyal support base, particularly if ethnic or tribal ties are part of the equation. In Haiti, Avril's hold on the Army is tenuous and he has no independent armed force committed to his presidency. Avril spent most of his military career as a behind-the-scenes adviser, with little opportunity as a unit commander to build links with the troops. He similarly lacks followers within the former Ton Ton Macoutes; indeed, considerable animosity has existed between Avril and the ostensible head of the Macoutes, former Minister of Interior and Defense Roger Lafontant. Despite Haiti's African heritage, the country lacks the significant ethnic or tribal divisions that exist in Liberia and Ghana. Although Haiti has some class differentiation by color, namely mulattoes and blacks, this has not been used much as a political lever since the days of "Papa Doc" Duvalier. [REDACTED]

25X1

Public and Military United Behind Leadership. In Ghana and Liberia, active public and military approval of their regimes provided a forgiving environment as the new governments struggled to formulate new policies. The tenuous nature of Avril's support in Haiti, however, provides little maneuvering room. Many civilian leaders remain concerned about his past ties to the Duvalier regime, and the President's backing within the lower military ranks appears contingent on his ability to meet their material needs. Although partisan leaders have expressed a willingness to give him a chance, many are positioning themselves to challenge Avril when the opportunity arises. [REDACTED]

25X1

SECRET

25X1

Furthermore, military cohesion--a critical element in the survival of previous Haitian regimes--has deteriorated in the wake of the September coup. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

[redacted] approximately 95 percent of the enlisted and NCO ranks of the Haitian Armed Forces were virtually uncontrollable in the first weeks after the coup. The same source reports up to 15 percent of the lower ranks continued to disregard military standards, showing disrespectful conduct toward national and unit commanders, as of late October. The indiscipline that was manifest in the thwarted coup attempt in October by a group of officers, NCOs, and enlisted men remains evident in ongoing challenges to authority in individual units in the countryside. In addition, military unity may be threatened by the infiltration of radicals into the enlisted ranks. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

[redacted] Avril is concerned about the growing influence of leftist groups on NCOs and enlisted men in the Presidential Guard. [redacted]

25X1

A Popular, Populist Leader. If events in Ghana and Liberia are any guide, a charismatic leader espousing a populist agenda can buy time to bolster his regime by appearing to be the savior of a troubled nation, by nurturing a sense of common purpose, and by appealing for public sacrifice. The current Haitian president has no such credentials. Avril accumulated substantial wealth as military procurer under the Duvaliers and was so closely linked to their regime that popular outcries prompted his removal from the ruling council in 1986. According to US Embassy reports, Avril is viewed as a pragmatist by most observers, an unreconstructed Duvalierist by some, and a visionary by a few close associates. We believe he is a pragmatist attempting, at least for now, to do whatever is necessary to retain power and to restore the military's institutional integrity. In addition, Avril lacks a dynamic speaking style and has been unable to evoke any popular emotional support from the public, according to press reports. Neither the general public nor the lower military ranks perceives him as a reformer. As a result, most Haitians, already coping with sustained sacrifices, are not likely to tolerate more extensive or prolonged deprivation as Avril attempts to pursue his policies. [redacted]

25X1

Substantial Foreign Assistance. Finally, our study of Liberia and Ghana underscored for us the role that foreign assistance--properly allocated and sustained--can play in helping a regime provide material benefits that will quell or forestall popular discontent. Avril has received enough new economic assistance from the United States and other donors to avert a shortfall of wheat and petroleum products for now. Even so, the aid fails to cover Haiti's most pressing budgetary needs--the basic material demands of the enlisted ranks and the foreign exchange deficit estimated at \$30-40 million through the fiscal year ending next September. Without a quick infusion of new aid to fill the foreign exchange gap, the economy will further deteriorate, and growing popular discontent will provide fertile ground for Avril's opponents. Members of the Military Academy

SECRET

Class of 1973 have shelved plans for a coup in order to give Avril a chance to meet their expectations, [redacted] but if he fails to do so quickly, others may decide a change in leadership is necessary. [redacted]

The lack of military aid also limits the Haitian forces' ability to maintain order. [redacted] several officers believe the Army lacks the equipment and funds to stem increasing crime and instability in the country. [redacted] regime is an "experiment" and, like those of former Presidents Leslie Manigat and Namphy, its staying power will depend on the amount and timeliness of foreign support. [redacted]

Conclusions

Regardless of whether Avril addresses the immediate impediments to his regime's stability, we believe his government will face--at a minimum--additional insurrections in the coming year. His ability to limit and contain them will depend largely on how well he manages to offset these negative factors--and only one is susceptible to his personal efforts at this time. For example, as the Ghana and Liberia cases indicate, *foreign assistance* can play a pivotal role in compensating somewhat for the regime's uncertain power base. Avril's most urgent needs are to acquire aid to appease the troops and to reestablish access to sizable and sustained budgetary and development funding. Without such assistance, Avril is not likely to retain the loyalty of the military, a necessary ingredient for exercising control. Embassy and other reporting suggests Avril has taken several steps--such as calling for the establishment of an election commission and increasing cooperation on antinarcotics measures--to show donor countries that his government is worthy of increased funding. Over the longer term, aid levels also will largely determine his willingness and ability to implement the political and economic reforms needed to build popular support. [redacted]

Another coup attempt like the one in October could occur at any time and with little warning. Such an uprising almost certainly would come from disgruntled military elements. In addition to the government's inability to attract sufficient aid, other factors could heighten the chances for another coup:

- Growing popular protests over living conditions or social issues.
- Further breakdown in military discipline.
- Increased leftist influence or sympathies within the lower military ranks.

SECRET

25X1

-- Gross misappropriation of foreign aid.

-- Attempts to reinvigorate Duvalier's thugs, the Ton Ton
Macoutes, or establish a new paramilitary force.

25X1

SUBJECT: Haiti: Prospects for the Military Regime

25X1

Distribution:

- Original -- The Honorable Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Room 6263, State
- 1 - Mr. Robert Pastorino, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Latin American Affairs, NSC, Room 391, OEOB
 - 1 - The Honorable Donald Gregg, Assistant to the Vice President for National Security Affairs, Room 298, OEOB
 - 1 - Mr. Stephen I. Danzansky, Special Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs, NSC, Room 365, OEOB
 - 1 - Brigadier General Peter Brintnall, Latin American Affairs, NSC, Room 392, OEOB
 - 1 - The Honorable Michael H. Armacost, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Room 7240, State
 - 1 - The Honorable Richard H. Melton, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Caribbean, Room 6263, State
 - 1 - Mr. David Zweifel, Director, Office of Caribbean Affairs (ARA/CAR), Room 3248, State
 - 1 - Mr. Luigi Einaudi, Director, Office of Policy Planning and Coordination, Room 6913A, State
 - 1 - Mr. David Smith, Chief, Middle-America-Caribbean Division, Office of Analysis for Inter-American Republics, Intelligence and Research, INR/IAA/MAC Room 7637, State
 - 1 - The Honorable Morton Abramowitz, Assistant Secretary, Intelligence and Research Bureau, Room 6531, State
 - 1 - Mr. Arnold Isaacs, Director, Office of Analysis for Inter-American Republics/INR, Room 7358, State
 - 1 - Mr. Richard H. Solomon, Director, Policy Planning Staff, Room 7311, State
 - 1 - Ambassador Richard T. McCormack, Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States (USOAS), Room 6494, State
 - 1 - Mr. David Cohen, Director, Office of Caribbean Affairs, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, Agency for International Development AID/LAC/CAR Rm. 3242 NS
 - 1 - The Honorable Richard Armitage, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, DoD, Room 4E808, Pentagon
 - 1 - The Honorable Richard Brown, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, DoD, Room 4C800, Pentagon
 - 1 - The Honorable Ann Hughes, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere, Room 3826, Commerce
- Room 2A520, Pentagon
- 1 - Mr. Randall Fort, Special Assistant to the Secretary, for National Security, Room 2049, Treasury

25X1

25X1

25X1



1 - SSCI [redacted] Room 7B02, HQ 25X1
 1 - HPSCI [redacted] Room 7B02, HQ
 1 - D/DCI/DDCI Executive Staff
 1 - DDI
 1 - O/DDI [redacted] 25X1
 1 - NIO/Economics - 7E62
 1 - NIO/LA - 7E62
 1 - NIO/Warning - 7E47
 1 - C/PES/DI - 7F24
 1 - NIC/AG - 7E47
 1 - D/CPAS - 7F13
 1 - PDB Staff - 7F30
 1 - C/PES - 2G25
 1 - CPAS/ILS/DI - 7G50
 1 - SCIO/CPAS/DI [redacted] - 7F27 25X1
 5 - CPAS/IMC/CB - 7G07
 1 - CPAS/ISS/DI - 7G50
 1 - CPAS/CDP/CC/DI - GH25
 1 - C/AL/LDA/DI - 1H39
 1 - C/PPD/LDA/DI - 5G03
 1 - D/OGI - 3G00
 1 - C/OGI/IND/DI - 1215 Ames Bldg.
 1 - C/OGI/FSIC/PI/DI - 2G09
 1 - C/OGI/GD/TW/DI - 2G00
 1 - C/LA/DO - 3C2016
 1 - C/LA/DO [redacted] - 3C3203 25X1
 1 - C/LA [redacted] /DO - 3D54 25X1
 1 - D/ALA - 3F45
 1 - DD/ALA - 3F45
 2 - ALA/PS (1 clean copy and 1 sourced copy) - 4F21
 1 - ALA Research Director - 3F44
 1 - C/ALA/SCD/DI - 3F23
 1 - DC/ALA/SCD/DI - 3F23
 1 - C/ALA/SCD/E - 3F23
 1 - C/ALA/SCD/N - 3F24
 1 - C/ALA/SCD/W - 3F23
 1 - C/ALA/SCD/CAR - 4F21
 1 - C/ALA/AFD - 3F30
 ..1 - DC/ALA/AFD - 3F30
 ..1 - C/ALA/AFD/W - 3F30
 1 - C/ALA/MCD - 4F29
 1 - ALA/SCD Files
 1 - ALA/SCD/CAR Files

DDI/ALA/SCD/CAR [redacted] (23 December 1988)

25X1